This Place of Everybody's Souls & Spirits

Student Writings from the Montana Arts Council
Artists in Schools/Communities Program, 1987–88

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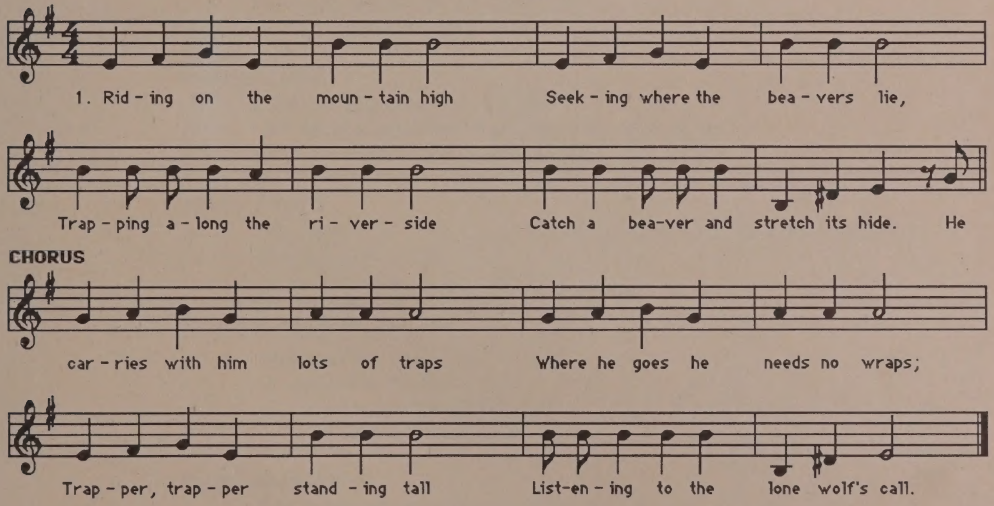
The title of this book is from a poem by the same name by Ted Brockie, Lockwood Schools

This Place of Everybody's Souls & Spirits

Writings by students participating in the 1987-88 Montana Arts Council Artists in Schools/Communities Program

Season of the Trapper

written by Florence/Carlton Sixth Grade Class



2. Here he comes back to camp
With his leggins very damp,
Trading hides at the rendezvous
Telling stories and eating stew.

CHORUS.

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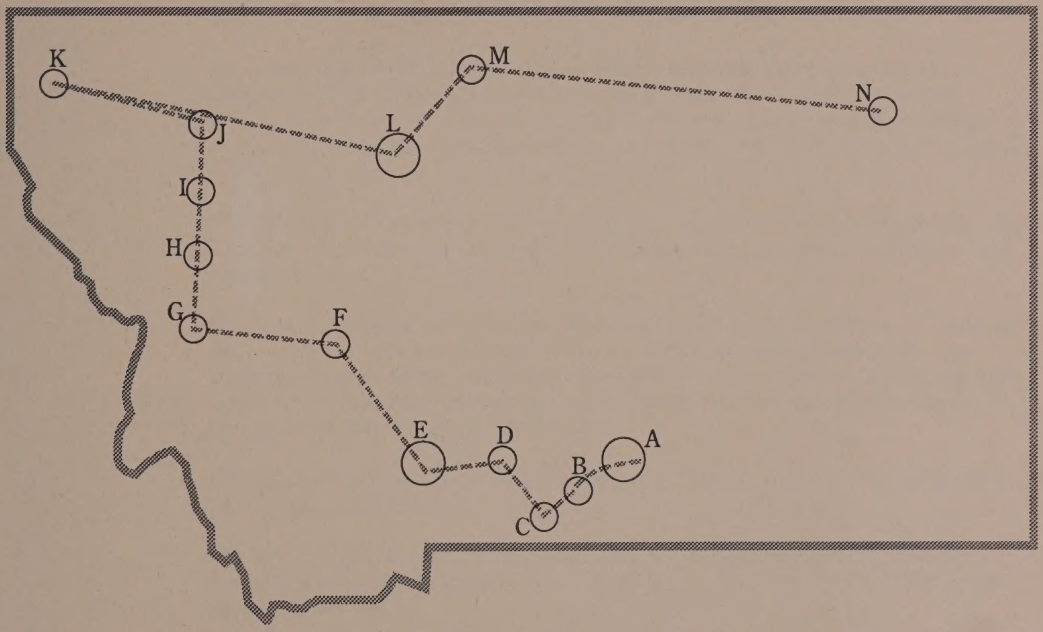
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Before You Take This Trail...

RPP: I guess we were both struck by how often, and how well, young Montanans write about the part of the country they know best. It's not much different from the work of published, well-known authors in that respect, is it?

RS: I think you're right. There's so much more land than there are people here. There's so much in your life here that draws you into the country — forest or prairie. Even if you're an in-door person it's the news you get from those who go out to take care of the stock; it's the news that fills the kitchen when people come in — even in town.

RPP: I feel like I'll never get to know Montana as well as I'd like to in my lifetime. So I wonder: what can a reader experience from a few selected works of children and young adults?

RS: Taking this route we've laid out here — this trail, as we've called it — would be like living a few days in the towns where we writers and poets worked with the students. In their poems and stories, the students reflect upon the things they think about before they've been charged with responsibility; they can point to those special rocks where they sit and dream.

RPP: Is there any possessiveness in these poems about the land? They write about "my youth, my mountains ..." ?

RS: Yes, in a certain way. Their poems show what they know well; and how they see it is as important to them as what others see. It's exciting to watch them make those discoveries.

RPP: We've got a U-shaped trial here ... beginning in the rim rocks at Billings, going west on I-90 following the Yellowstone River, around the tailings of old mines, up through the valley that splits the Helena National Forest, across the Divide into the Bitterroot Valley, up beyond Missoula into the Bison Range, along the east shore of Flathead Lake, up the the reaches of the Kootenai, then a swift right turn along the northern tier of the state, through Marias Pass straight east along the Hi-line to the flats of Poplar. By my calculations it would take nearly 30 hours of straight driving to trace this route — that's not including any rest stops.

RS: All our Montana readers will understand travelling long distances!

RPP: About the lines from the students' poems we quoted and used for titles for each section — do you think they reflect a close relationship to the land?

RS: Yes, very much so. "The sun in the morning is like a yellow paper plate" for the first section, for instance. The way that girl saw the sun come up over a wide, open expanse suggests the country of south-central Montana where our trail begins.

RPP: Every work of fiction from Montana seems to be threaded together with the land as possibly equal to the characterizations of the people portrayed. When we agreed on the title, did we suggest this relationship between the land and the people?

RS: I think that's why we chose it. That line was written in response to a passage I read to the class from James Welch's novel, *Winter in The Blood.* The young writer is a seventh grade Native American.

RPP: Do you think the sons and daughters of the white settlers are as close to the land as this young Native American descendent?

RS: Yes, but there's an important cultural difference. Descendents of homesteaders write of their part of the country in the ways that it can be lived in — their families' livelihoods, their adventures, for instance, and often of their fierce love for one place. One canyon, one river. Children of Montana's Native American peoples write of the country in these ways, too, but they are always aware of how this land has been sacred to their peoples for centuries.

RPP: "Land" and "place" then, have considerable force in shaping the way young writers of Montana present themselves; the way they allow us to glimpse the roles they see themselves in — of both cultures. That's what makes the writings here so strong and, in fact, very memorable.

Ripley Schemm
Ron Philip Pulcini

The sun in the
morning is like
a yellow paper plate

Lockwood Schools (Billings) — Ripley Schemm
Fred W. Graff School (Laurel) & Park City School — Al Masarik
West School (Laurel) — B. J. Buckley

Untitled

I was
born in
bright yellow
Spring.
I was
a rug rat.
Everybody
thought
I'd be
trouble.

—Michelle Thomas
3rd Grade, Lockwood Schools

Untitled

Maggie is gray and eats lots of hay.
She likes a day with my mom.
She drinks lots of water
when it's hotter and nice,
but she doesn't play dice
if anybody rides her but Mom.
She bucks!
That's what she does best.

—Chris Stapelton
3rd Grade, Lockwood Schools

Untitled

When I was born, the leaves
started to fall, birds flying somewhere,
exhausted from a trip to
a place I never even knew.

—Olivia Pentecost
3rd Grade, Lockwood Schools

A House Full of Laughter

On April 24, 1979,
there was a baby
born in Billings.
There was a happiness
and a laughter in the Lorang
house. My mother was having
coffee, my dad was having
champagne, and my uncles and
aunts were having a lovely tea.

—Jamie Lorang
3rd Grade, Lockwood Schools

Grandpa

I remember when you and I
used to swing on your porch
swing and gaze at the fireflies
in the dark sky, and I remember
when you always said "Ho Hum."

—Kelly Harpold
3rd Grade, Lockwood Schools

This Place of Everybody's Souls and Spirits

This is a place where only the elders go
A place of secrecy, of honor
In this place the remains of a great warrior
The shield of his spirit, the arrows of his heart
His trophies and rewards
The great pipe of the history of the Gros Ventre.
Kids dream of seeing this place
This place of everybody's souls and spirits.
The great burials of a chief
As the pipe whistles in the wind
As the arrows point the way
The prayers lift your heart
Feelings enlighten your mind
The place of the Gros Ventre
The place where only the elders go.

—Ted Brockie
Lockwood Schools

The Old Oak Tree

The old oak tree sits
at the top of the rims
peering over in the morning mist
acting like the town's guardian.

—Craig McAllister
6th Grade, Park City School

Becoming a Young Chief

As I walk into the dancing arena,
I see Indians in their dancing outfits,
getting ready for a contest. The drum
starts beating and as I take my first step,
I feel proud of what song it is. The judges
are looking for your footwork on the floor.
The drum starts beating up faster and you dance
keeping with the beat of the drum. The song ends,
you are winded. The judges line you up in
single file, looking for the number that the person
was wearing when he danced proud of his song
and the people he was representing in the contest
for being a young chief.

—Sonny Old Elk
Lockwood Schools

The Water of my Dreams

This water would wrinkle me
When I took a bath in it.
It would help me float
When I swam in it
It would feed me
With the fish it gives
And that's the water of my
dreams.

—Justin Harnish
6th Grade, Park City School

Girl Friends

You are beautiful, and very smart.
You're like underwear, size 12.
Fits me perfect and makes me comfortable.
Now you're going with someone else.
I guess it's time,
to change my underwear.

—Xang Moua
Lockwood Schools

Untitled

You in the Camaro
You with the window down
You with the dark shades on
Why are you so cool?

You the one with the cheerleader
You with the pedal to the metal.
You with the nicest car in town.
Why are you so cool?

—Aaron Rukstad
Lockwood Schools

Leather

The smell of a horse
hide.
The feel of patterned
designs.
I see flowers
and circles and
many other
shapes.
I hear the hard
work of mallets
hitting the tops
of the carving
tools.
These are all the
things I see
in a piece
of leather.

—Robyn Nichols
6th Grade, Park City School

The Toad

A toad,
green
with warts
break dancing in the garden next
door.
obese,
it's long tongue slashing the air
it's eyes
gazing toward that unseen fly.

—Brenda Larsen
9th Grade, Park City School

The Seamstress

A park bench on a blank street
lonely, she sits waiting
skin creased with age
fingers moving a needle in a silent ballet
sun stares down cruelly
parching, stinging, drying.
On the perimeter of the town
traffic streams in.

—David Dempster
9th Grade, Park City School

Park City, Montana

Small hometown,
large with rumors.
Law of one man,
partying teenagers.
Beat-up trucks,
challenging looks.
Sports orientated,
College drop-outs.
Basketball games,
Indian names.
Winners take all,
Losers do fall.
Park City, Montana,
my home town.

—Monica Christensen
12th Grade, Park City School

Untitled

When the unicorns
come out to play
at night they talk
outside my bedroom
window.

—Melissa Kober
5th Grade, Park City School

Magic

Abracadabra!
Hocus Pocus!
Pull your rabbit from your hat.
Don't saw that girl in half,
she's my mother.
Endless scarves come from your
pocket, put it back it's ugly.
It's really great that you
make that egg turn into a
pigeon but now turn it back.
Do real magic, something new.
I'm bored with that old trick.

—Grace Eide
9th Grade, Park City School

Crows

Crows are laughing at my jokes
Crows are flying through the
sky wearing their black wigs
They're having a party with lots of
laughing and good food to eat.

—Lance Onchud
Fred W. Graff School

The Volcano

I saw the volcano
Blowing his nose

I saw him
Throw the kleenex away
Then he got a blooding nose

As it tip toed down the mountain
And into the town
As it bubbled away
Like soup in the microwave.

—Matt Feuerbacker
Fred W. Graff School

Sonny

In a smoky bar
of flashing lights
and spinning stools

behind a fraction
of dried bacon
that was once a
smoking cigar

an old man with a
boat shaped grin

looking like a
kid in a candy store

—Mr. Lorfing's 5th grade class
Fred W. Graff School

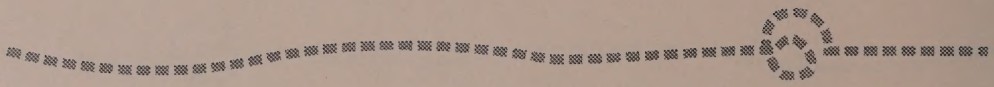
Making the Bed

I put the pillow on.
Snowcapped mountains way up
high.

Then I put the flower blanket
on.
Huge meadows of flowers.

Then my Teddy Bears.
Real animals in the meadow.

—Miranda Mace
5th Grade, West School



Xerox Machine

I lift up the lid
and there on the window
put a white paper page
the black words, sounds,
sentences, paragraphs, poems
on it
and shut the lid like a blanket
to keep the words, warm,
And I push the red button
(or is it the green one?)
and an electric camera sunlight
copies it
(trees and shadows and grass
on white sky or growing
out of cement)
23 times and I have
a forest

—K-5th Grade group poem
West School

The Endless Night

The wolves mournfully sing their song to
the moon who ignores them.
The wind beats the trees as it runs
down
its endless trail.
The owl in the
tree asks the question "who" to whoever
passes by while the stars gossip

—Cyrus Gillett
Fred W. Graff School

Sun

The sun in the
morning is like
a yellow paper plate
in the middle of
a fire.

The sun is like
a piece of corn in
a red basket or a yellow
dandelion in front of
a big orange tulip.

The sun is like
a red bucket, with
the inside rusted.

—Misti Peterson
5th Grade, West School

I sit on a place where it sticks out
and you see all the nature around

Joliet Schools — Sandra Dorr

A Cliff

I sit on a place where it sticks out
and you see all the nature around.

The green fields of spring accept
your presence and continue their work.

The country road snakes along,
winds over the hills.

I sit, and think, and watch the blessing
going on around me.

—Anonymous
Joliet High School

The Forbidden Land

Pryor, Montana
a mysterious, inviting place for those who know it,
parched and forbidding
for those who don't.

Lush, green grass blankets the soft curves of
the foothills.
An almost colorless blue sky haunts the highest peaks of
the mountains towering overhead.
Above the creak of my saddle,
the sound of one hundred pounding hooves.

In a matter of seconds, the mares round
a bend of the valley,
their breathless foals gasping for air.
They belong here,
the wild ones,
to run free through the rugged beauty
of their home.

—Tammy Yost
8th Grade, Joliet School

(Lunes)

The shadow on
the wall does not look
like me today.

Love is as
gentle as a breeze but
it can hurt.

The wind blows
the willows back and forth
just like people
are always tossed back and
forth between friends.

—Amanda Harmon
5th Grade, Joliet School

About Me

In the
nice warm
city of
Polson, Montana
at 1:27 July 3, 1992
I had on my
all leather air Nikes.
I was sitting
on a theater seat
eating popcorn
and drinking pop.
I was causing trouble.

—Anonymous
9th Grade, Joliet High School

Flashes of brown, yellow, black
The band of wild horses gallops
across the prairie

Red Lodge — B. J. Buckley

Mad

You feel like you want to lock the world in a room forever and throw away the key. And be a shark and swim faster than a speeding bullet under the sea. And be a wolf or a giant. So I could I could sink to the bottom of the Universe. I want to be a bee and sting the earth. I wish I could break everything into a million pieces. I feel as if it would snow forever. I wish I could be a mean dog so no one would come around me. Some times I wish I was a bird so I could hide in a nest all day long or never come out of my house. It feels like being caught in a cloudy foggy hail storm in the middle of no where. It's a black discouraging feeling inside. You get as tired as a snail. You feel like a piece of dirt on a truck or a slave that has to work for a person who pouts all the time.

—Genefer McKittrick
4th Grade, Red Lodge Schools

The Doll

I have a doll
that my grandmother gave me.
I left it on a table
and someone picked it up.
Her brown hair swished
her red dress
fell upon her legs
and her little porcelain legs
just clinked.

Renee McKittrick
5th Grade, Red Lodge Schools

Untitled

Someone is doing a handstand.
It's the king.
He's eating a piece of pie too.
An airplane flys by and
he falls.
He says fudge.
He trys again
He's doing a math problem
at the same time.
He's dancing on his hands.
And the ball goes between
his arms.
And he falls.

The End.

—Roy Scheetz
4th Grade, Red Lodge Schools

Black

Night is black, dark is black,
out of orbit space is black,
I once ran into a pole on my bike, and got a close-up of black.
I once knew a guy who got in a fight,
now I go to visit, and I wear black!
I have a friend who doesn't
like eclipses for they introduced him to black!
When my dad cooks supper, you can always count on much black!

—Salina Chatlain
5th Grade, Red Lodge Schools

Wild Horses

Flashes of brown, yellow, black
The band of wild horses gallops across the prairie.

Flaring eyes and wavy manes.
They move across the prairie.

Stallions with smoke curling from their lips,
Rearing and battering each other with their powerful legs.

Each baring their teeth,
One is fighting to keep the band,
The other is fighting to get the band.

While the mares graze on grass,
Wild colts romp on the prairie.
Then, when the stallion,
New or old is ready,
Again the band will move across the prairie.

—Maren Holmen
4th Grade, Red Lodge Schools

Behind are the Crazies
jutting, hard, sudden projections
from the prairie.
Mountains of my youth.

Big Timber — Ripley Schemm

Untitled

What's the big deal?
so they play the game well
the fans are dedicated
grandparents, parents, babes — all come to watch

we expected a rough game
and feel especially good about this win.
But

What's the big deal?
Why must we rub it in harder
than with any other team?
Why do we jeer from the safety of our bus,
feeling an exhilarating fear
when dark-skinned glares are cast our way.
We go on telling stories of what they've done
to winning teams

What's the big deal?

—Kim Drivdahl
Sweet Grass County High School

Question Mark

America — what are you doing?
dreaming in your popcorn world
still chewing that same piece of gum?

America — a dream — a nightmare?
You have done a lot for us: care packages — now missiles?
You are rich — did you see those people on the street?
Free and equal — what about the Blacks?

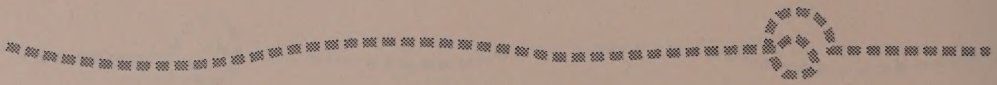
You are the Best — you think
America — I'm afraid of your fantasy.

—Nicola Paulsen
Swedish Exchange Student
Sweet Grass County High School

Untitled

When I watch you, I see
the strength and wisdom you've
gained by the years.
As you sit by the fire, with your
thin fragile bones, you look for
the past when all was well.

—Tomoko Ferguson
Sweet Grass County High School



Heaven

The pickup bounces and rattles,
I drive fast along the parallel ruts.
Ahead is where I always slow,
anticipating harsh beauty.
Behind are the Crazies,
jutting, hard, sudden projections
from the prairie.
Mountains of my youth.
On my right, sloping away,
is the roll of bunch-grassed prairie,
dry, brown, shimmering
in the August heat.
I know it drops away,
becomes broken hills
covered with scrub cedar,
juniper, twisted limber pine.
I think back to a colder day,
November, wandering, alone in a blizzard,
thinking again of beauty in this land's harshness.
Ahead of me stands the "Lone Tree",
a dead cottonwood, alone except for
shadows of the clouds,
racing along the ground.
Then I see them, a white flash
Antelope jump, run, startled,
then turn and stop...
the dust of their hooves settles,
then they are off again as I rattle by.
I envy their freedom, their space.
Cresting a hill, I leave behind
a small piece of Heaven,
approaching the fields where I work.

—Aaron Drivdahl
Sweet Grass County High School

This is where the farm kids came
to cool off in the balmy age of summer

Bozeman High School — Ripley Schemm & B. J. Buckley
Belgrade High School — Elizabeth Gold

The French Painting with the Long French Name

Randomly placed items
Strategically
placed about the canvas
Each with their own
purposeless purpose;
the artist's special talent
I feel as though
I'm gazing
gazing through a window
quietly peeping,
upon the artist's
brain
His world is not regular
up
is left and down is right
It seems that as he paints
his hand muscles fight
Striving to
work together
independently together
His mind conceives
an image,
his muscles fight each other
As I gaze unappreciatively,
upon the artist's work
I wish for his sake
he had been a carpenter.

—Brett Kucera
Bozeman High School

Woman Ironing

Like an emotionally harmed slave,
She strains, emotionally,
physically, to complete her duties

Away,
her abusive husband selfishly
works
not thinking at all,
of her,
about them.
She starves,
for relaxation.
Yearns,
for happiness in her world of
lonely and hurt.
Weak, in her dismal thoughts, she searches,
reaching deeply for a reason, an explanation.

The empty home lies dull in peace, unfilled
of happiness, riches, even the necessary.
She releases worries, trying to depart —
precious hopes,
depressing wishes ... of the future.
As she presses,
weakly, softly – her hand-made rags,
with her worn, rusty iron,
upon the sturdy, unique, over-used,
wooden table top.
She is struggling, trying,
to iron out life's problems.

—Missy Shepherd
Bozeman High School

Acrobats by Charles Demuth

Acrobats, suicidal lunatics
Playing in the sun, defying gravity
Out in the world
among the trees, and bushes,
leaving home.

—Travis Lindskog
Bozeman High School

Untitled

You stare at the adult
wary eyes empty
not seeing
reflections in their wrinkles
of the glorious future
they so earnestly
urge you toward
but have not felt
themselves.
Empty,
wondering,
floundering
You, alone
in your own future.

—Kim Sabo
Bozeman Senior High

Untitled

What do you expect
Music on the guitar
An empty bottle of wine or
was it two.
Quaint dinner with no
interruption

Mixed emotions, good and sad
let a wonderful evening, let it be
at that.

—Jackie LeClair
Bozeman High School

Haiku

Out on a winter
meadow lone coyotes howl, as
dark owls eat warm mice.

—Joe Schmitt
Bozeman High School

Summer

Long moonlit nights spent
by the lake, playing like birds
in a warm birdbath

—Scott Cruknor
Bozeman High School

Winter Stinks

Winter is like a
person who just ate garlic
breathing in your face

Springtime

Boing, Boing, welcome spring
birds are back, winter is gone!
Need I say, boing, more?

Montana Summer? Ha!

Montana Summer?
You might as well go sunbathe
in a deep freezer.

Fall

Leaves
fall
from
the
trees
Unsatisfied
with
their
lives
Commit
suicide

—Brett Kucera
Bozeman High School

The Bridge

Rusting,
spanning the dark November waters
rumbling planks as a
truck glides over.
A section of guard rail gone,
A tired hemp rope hanging from the truss.
This is where the farm kids came
to cool off in the balmy age of summer.

—Todd Kringler
Bozeman Senior High

Untitled

You with your small town style
And your silent but shy smile
You with your backward country look
And your ability to never finish a book
You with your happy-go-lucky life-style
And your girl chasing all the while
You with your ability to ride a horse
And your ability to never finish a course
You with your ability to listen
And your making your friends glisten.
You with your desperate hold on life
and your handy work with a knife
You with your sometime brutal honesty
And this is what I see!

—Don Johnson
Bozeman Senior High

Mother

A now blanched bauble in her jewelry box emblazons
a sliding reaction in black and I implode at
the her within me.

Take glazed eyes to view the sunset with,
she had said in her iron isolation at 17
and here I am in my womb of Montana
aloneness as she basks in the slipping sun.

I stand amid groveling sagebrush
bulges on earth's skin there
and I feel that the earth is round.
I realize the feminine curve
of it while the universal code
of nature's formula takes its final step in time
over and over again so that I am trapped
in history as it is trapped in me.

—Nadya Pittendrigh
Bozeman Senior High School

Untitled

The night is dim
the moon is cut in half
open, its center.
People run and laugh in the town square
as the horses stare at the sky
as if to worship
a god.

—Charles All
Bozeman High School

The Range

Jack Kerouac had the eyes of a cowboy
gleaning
with the want of distance tempting
you with ink.
You, with the eight arms,
tear down your stance for a minute.
Let the ink
absorb you
only because you
absorb the ink.
Sure, you who have already seen
these words with a bored slump,
armistice shoots through war
like plains fires.
But make sure you assure yourself
that the range grass will grow again.
You, harvest it with your iron arms
and chew like your silly cow does.
It really is O.K. to be silly and
then again be cowed.

—Nadya Pittendrigh
Bozeman Senior High School

Harley Davidson

Stride out,
Shiny black helmet in left hand.
All black leather—jacket, boots, gloves.
Swing your leg over,
Comfortable low seat.
Helmet on, jacket zipped,
Keys in the ignition turn,
Demon eyes blaze to life.
Cool, warm, gloves, grip handlebars
Clutch, throttle, break.
Swift Rebel kick and Mighty Harley roars.
Backfire thunder,
Powerful beast you ride
Heart beats, eyes flash
Clutch, first gear
Screaming tire
Screaming mind
Ride legends in the night.

—Lance Picton
Bozeman Senior High School

Lawnmower from Hell

It all started one August afternoon. I went out and started mowing my lawn. While I was doing just that, water-like drops were hitting me in the face. When I went to wash my face off, I found blood. I could not figure where it came from and then I looked down to find that my lawnmower was full of blood. I thought that maybe I ran over an animal. So I decided to go wash the lawnmower. After I gave it a bath I decided put it in the garage until next week. I went inside and grabbed a beer and went in to watch the news.

"News Bulletin"— Mayor Johnson has been brutally murdered. It looks like he was run over by a lawnmower.

But at the time I thought nothing about it. That night while I was lying in bed reading a book I heard a scream from across the street. Instantly I ran to see what was the matter and all I could hear was something in my garage. So I went to investigate and what I found was my lawnmower full of blood. I knew then that I was in big trouble. Immediately I decided I must kill it. But how?

—Chris Klein
Belgrade High School

The World's Most Beautiful Woman

Dear Diary,

I don't know who I am anymore. I don't feel like a person at all; a manufactured product would be a better description. My whole identity is a mask—a mask that imprisons me, the person, inside.

I tried to break free in the past, but it was useless; the mold had been cast. Now I don't care anymore, and that worries me.

Sadly enough, my wisdom has come too late—it's useless to me now, as it always has been. That fact that I am a highly intelligent, informed individual has always come as a shock to people. Why do they find it so difficult to believe that I have a brain? Just once I wish that someone—anyone, would talk to me and *really* listen to what I have to say.

They don't know the real me—they don't care—I'm not supposed to be real, let alone have thoughts and feelings. Give the people what they want—a pretty picture to be looked at and admired. I'm *not* a freak in a circus sideshow! I'm human! Can't they see? Doesn't anyone see? I'm looking in the mirror, but I see someone else. Somewhere along the way I lost myself.

Just the other night I turned on the tv to relax. I looked for an interesting program to lose myself in, and settled on the life story of Jayne Mansfield. After watching the first few minutes, I couldn't move from my chair.

Even though I had known nothing about the woman before that night, I was fascinated with her and felt like I knew her; she seemed so real to me.

—Maria Severson
Belgrade High School

The World's Laziest Man

January 6, 1988

Today has been such a horrifying day! My wife got up early this morning to cook me breakfast and while she was downstairs, the alarm clock next to my bed went off. I can't believe she didn't put everything on hold and come turn it off for me. She did finally bring my breakfast up to me. I had my regular: ham, eggs, toast and coffee. When I finished my breakfast, my wife brought my toothbrush with toothpaste on it, and a glass of water. Then she made me brush my own teeth. I can't believe that! She never ceases to amaze me. What's she trying to do to me? At least she did comb my hair. Then she dressed me and put my shoes on me, but she actually had the nerve to make me tie my shoelaces. She asked me to get up and sit in the chair next to our bed so she could make the bed. When she finally finished she gave me the remote control for the television, so I laid back down on the bed. Before she left for work she put the telephone on the bed by my side so I could call the pizza place at lunch time and have a pizza delivered to my room. Of course we already have it worked out so that it will always be delivered straight to my room so I won't have to walk to the front to get it. I watched television and ate pizza until my wife finally got home from work. She cooked a supper of lasagne, corn, and blueberry muffins, with a glass of milk to drink. She brought my dinner to my room and we ate and watched television until 9:00 p.m. Then she brought me this paper and pencils so I could write this journal. Well, I guess I will let my wife put the journal on the night stand next to the bed so I can go to sleep. I sure am tired because today's been such a hectic day. I sure hope tomorrow isn't as exhausting as today was.

—Charlotte Busby
Belgrade High School

The cattle are munching on grass in the valley

Montana City School — Sandra Dorr

Untitled

I wish I could wear
earrings

or be a wonderful gymnast
I wish

all the dumps
would glaze over

and one day I would wake up
and smell something sweet.

—Julie Price
Montana City School

L.A. at Night

The dark night sky
covers L.A.

as I cruise
through

Palm trees lit
with neon

My motorcycle ripping
through town

Lights of buildings
flash by

The warm, delicate breeze
blows softly

As my soul is lifted
by the night.

—Anonymous
Montana City School

Untitled

The cattle are
munching
on grass in the
valley on
a hot summer
day by
the barn in the
shade.

—Jeremiah Sperry
Montana City School

The Bird in the Tree

Look
at
the

bird
high
up

there

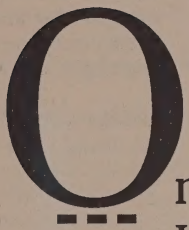
with white
little

hair

what
a bird

hi
up
there

—Shaun Moore
Montana City School



nce by the river
Indians used to live

Lone Rock School (Stevensville) — Ripley Schemm

Untitled

I used to be a whole number
but now I'm a fraction.
I used to be 234
but now I'm 234 - 6,
that is, 39, remainder nothing.

Once I was uneven
but now I'm straight.
I used to be a divisor
but now I'm a remainder.
I used to be a bad number
but now I'm perfect.

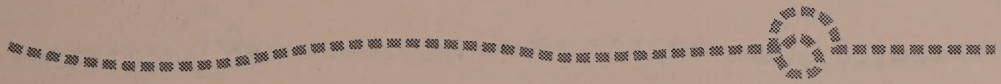
I used to be odd
but now I'm even.
I used to be a 4x4
but now I'm a circle.
I used to be square
but now I'm cool!

—4th Grade Collaborative Poem
Lone Rock School

Untitled

Once by the River
Indians used to live.
They would fish in the afternoon.
They would hunt in the evening.
At night they would lay down
and listen to the owls and coyotes
and sing the beautiful song.

—Rick Price
5th Grade, Lone Rock School



Untitled

When we got home yesterday,
our dogs were playing, running, barking,
jumping, climbing on the couch, chewing
on their bones, leaping in the spray,
and leaping for our supper.

They were making foxy faces, sad faces,
happy faces,
fierce, wet, weird, mad faces.

When we got home yesterday,
our cats were chasing mice, biting grasshoppers,
tipping over scratching posts, eating the dogs'
food, fishing in the fish bowl, climbing trees,
meowing, scratching our legs, watching TV,
having babies, purring in the sun, leaving
kitty footprints all over the car,
and chasing our dogs.

They were making foxy faces, sad faces,
happy faces,
fierce, wet, weird, mad faces.

—Mrs. Halttunen's 2nd Grade Group Poem
Lone Rock School

Untitled

Oh, I know a horse who
bucked me off. I know a cow
would not give me milk. So I
fed my horse and she still
bucked me off. I fed my cow
and still she gave me no milk.
Oh, what can I do?
Oh, I know I will call the vet.
Yessir! Yessir! And the vet
came. He tried to sit on my
horse and she did not buck.
The cow gave milk.

—Melony Floyd
2nd Grade, Lone Rock School

Gossip

Have you heard? Have you heard?
Carolyn Smith's house burnt down,
Jack got pneumonia,
and Peggy Sue went to China.

Have you heard? Have you heard?
Jim dyed his hair pink,
the big oak tree fell down,
and the math teacher is moving away.
Hurray!

—Kristi Barstad
6th Grade, Lone Rock School

Untitled

The Coors Mansion
so big
so old
so sacred
so special
a part of our history

what happened there?
Did a boy named Tom
Dick
or Harry
live there?
Did they fetch water,
get a treatment of the old
horse hair couch?

In the Parlor
The Parlor so
perfect.

Against the wall
in the Parlor
there is a piano,
a piano that family used.
That piano, the tour guide
says,
is haunted.
She says that
sometimes the piano
plays by itself
at night
when no one is around.
Is is true?
Did it really happen?
Is it rigged?
I don't
know.

If it happened
It happened
In the Parlor.

—Anna Miller
5th Grade, Lone Rock School

Rocks

On my shelf
Are rocks
Polished and shined
By the river's edge.
On my shelf
are rocks of gold and quartz
That I have saved.
Rocks
That I plan, someday, to
Give to my Grandchildren.
On my shelf
Are rocks.

—Jonathan S. Shoemaker
6th Grade, Lone Rock School

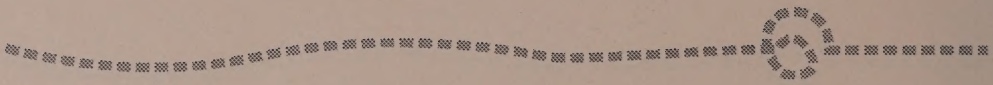
Worm Man

Dad, when I was little,
you used to pretend you had
pet worms poking through your shirt.
They were just your fingers.
I know you didn't mind publicity
but I gave you the wrong kind
on public radio. I visited
a radio station and announced
that you were the Worm Man,
who, what, how, and why.

—Tawnie Sabin
5th Grade, Lone Rock School

The vacant tool shed
Where my grandfather said to me,
"If something's worth doing,
It's worth doing well."

Target Range School (Missoula) — Ripley Schemm



Untitled

He sat in the church alone.
As the sun shone on his time-worn face
he looked back upon his life —
He looked at his hands
wrinkled and unsteady —
and remembered a day when they were strong
and remembered when he was young
and held a gun tightly
to protect his country.
He remembers how frightened he was
as fire lit the night sky
and the pain he felt
as he watched his companions die
but he held his gun tightly
and thought of the respect of a soldier.
He thought of the music they danced to
and what they were fighting for —
And he wonders what has happened
in all the years since then.
Freedom, he thinks, and remembers
when they said freedom so carefully,
letting the words glide from their lips
and touch their hearts —
Freedom and America, he thinks,
and wonders what has happened
in all the years since then.

—Julie Stevenson
8th Grade, Target Range School

To the Boys

I remember
All the way back across years
The group of us, laughing little girls
in pink dresses our mothers liked.

When one of you came our way
A panic arose; we cried
"Go away! You're not allowed!"
While those unlucky enough to
be touched screamed "Cooties!"

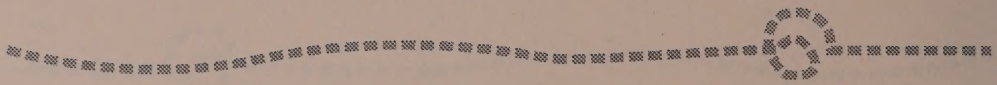
Now, years later, it's different.
Now, no longer "Cooties!"
You are human.
You are friends.

—Amber Schwanke
8th Grade, Target Range School

Sister

We have fought in all the rooms.
We have been like friends everywhere, too,
for if it wasn't for you,
my life would be dull and boring.
You brought color into my life.
You made me work hard
for what I believe in.
You made me mad
for just about anything.
I know it wasn't a joy
living with me for 13 years,
But I think we both
learn much from each other,
and I'm happy to be
stuck with you.

—Robert W. Chambers III
7th Grade, Target Range School

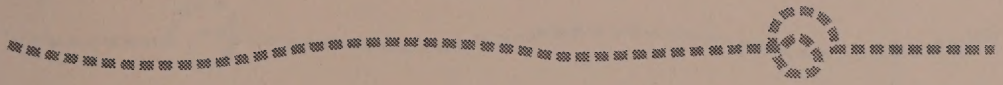


Untitled

What I remember about that day
is getting onto the ship
and sailing away from my homeland
to a place unknown to me,
holding onto my mother
looking and listening to people talk
feeling scared and lonely

not agreeing with my parent's decision
not sure I really wanted to go
not sure of anything

—Thanh Quan
8th Grade, Target Range School



Returning to the Homestead

It feels like a foreign land.
The Grey-Line Tour
Of a language once fluent
But now forgotten.

We drive by slowly,
Viewing the ramshackle barn
Where cats nabbed
Vaulting streams of milk
The roofless grainery
Where we butchered steers,
My grandfather's pets
The line of tall elms
My mother planted
And watered with buckets
The vacant tool shed
Where my grandfather said to me,
"If something's worth doing,
it's worth doing well."
In the days
Before cliches.

—Dan Wilcox
7th Grade Teacher, Target Range School

Untitled

My skateboard is special to me.
Its worn pink and blue wheels,
the scratched chrome tracks.
The hot-pink board worn and
chipped on the edges.
Many shapes and sizes of grip
tape on the top.
The tail broken and covered
with glue to keep it together.
Cluttered with stickers on the
bottom.
The rails, beaten from the curbs,
keep the bottom from getting
scratched.
I love the way it rides
smooth, or screeches to a stop.
The sound it makes when I
pop an ollie or the way it
lands hard after I launch
off a ramp.

—Matt Heist
8th Grade, Target Range School

It's the middle of October
A plow rusts in a half-plowed field

Charlo Schools — Al Masarik

A Test

Taking a test is like sucking
on raw eggs for an hour.
It's like sitting in a hot
dusty carton with Bach and
Mozart playing eat it in
G minor.
Tests are like having
a brain tumor in your foot
an atom bomb dropped
on your best friend's
house.

—Kevi Sor-Lokken
9th Grade, Charlo High School

Untitled

In the field
on the outskirts of town
lay a broken plow
with cows milling around it
in the distance you could hear coyotes howling
driving along you see
a hawk diving at a pheasant
a stream, where a deer, and
its colorful faun are standing
you look in the mirror, and
you see a dog chasing you.

—Larry Coleman
10th Grade, Charlo High School

Untitled

The Charlo vicinity
quiet, calm and relaxing.
It's the middle of October
A plow rusts in a half-plowed field.
Grey and bent,
stacks of pipe sit in piles.
A meadow lark perched on a post
sings to the bare field.
Mangled barbed-wire fences
crisscross the fields.
Telephone poles, with sagging wires,
seem to go on eternally.
An elk is getting his fill
on the last bits of green grass and alfalfa.
And winding its way through a back road
creeps a dirty, rusty Kootenai cruiser.

—Steve Wagner
10th Grade, Charlo High School

Rest Home

Carefully entering
looking around
petrified
old people stumbling
you force yourself to help
a murky white environment
awaits you.

—Chad Soester
8th Grade, Charlo Middle School

Untitled

Betrayal is like being
hung on a meat hook
and left there to suffer.

It's like having a blade
of burning ice plunged through
your back in the dead of night.

It's like seeing your favorite
puppy dog hit by an oncoming
freight train.

—Greg Wamsley
12th Grade, Charlo High School

"Old Friend"

The car exhaled bad
breath as it opened its mouth.
Dirt sitting on the floor, dust suffocating the dash.
Its body laying low from weak limbs.
Today the car is leaving
to visit in silence with old
crippled relatives.
A coat of overgrown weeds
sits where she slept.
I hear her cough and sneeze
as she leaves me
hearing the arthritis from old bones.
The junkman will take care of her.

—Don Sweem
11th Grade, Charlo High School

The Cowboy's Dream

Sitting aboard his charred horse
a wrinkled old man
face masked with attacking shadows
he skulks along a cool lake
he searches for his wandering herd
distantly a cow screams for her calf
he creeps forward
a white tail flags
the horse shies
ahead eyes glow in rising moonlight
he awakes to sizzling bacon and
rubs his stubborn eyes.

—Dodd Elverud
11th Grade, Charlo High School

Poems

Poems look like a special
paper
written by somebody important
and they will be special
if you write them just right.

—Joseph Decker
4th Grade, Charlo School

No Thinking

I'm writing a poem about not
thinking of a poem. When I write
a poem and I get stuck I get angry
and I have to start all over AGAIN
and Again and Again and Again and there
isn't anything else to write about And I
feel like a chimpmunk with a rotten nut!

—Tammy Goyne
5th Grade, Charlo School

Coyotes

They tell me to
have bad dreams
during my sleep.
They tell me things
I don't want to hear.
They argue over who
is going to scare which
human being.
When Coyotes howl they
tell you to have bad
thoughts.
Before you go to
bed you can hear
them try to scare you.

—Melon Connors
6th Grade, Charlo School

Bad Day

Yesterday, perfect
today, bad
Bad days grow, worse, worse
you are sad, the day is bad,
nothing goes right, everything
goes wrong, another bad day!
Flowers droop when you walk by
Trees don't whistle, your
hair sticks to the sky, another
bad day, they come and go.

—Eve Burns
6th Grade, Charlo School

Untitled

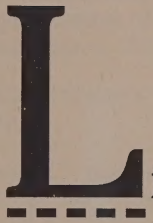
When I'm in school I feel like
I'm a beaver,
stuck in a trap —
having to leave a part
of myself
there.

—John Weber
6th Grade, Charlo School

Poet

A poet, what really is a poet?
He can make a sentence sound like a song.
When you hear a poet you feel like a cloud, just floating
away,
you feel like the wind, blowing through the trees,
Having a blast, just being a poet, yourself.

—Bell Wehrheim
6th Grade, Charlo School



Like stepping back in time

Bigfork High School — Ron Pulcini

A brief explanation ...

This scene is taken from "Next Stop, Bigfork," a three-act play written by the Centennial Project class at Bigfork High School.

In the course of the spring semester the class read histories of Bigfork and the lower Flathead Valley, interviewed senior citizens and knowledgeable people and even visited the oldest cemetery in the area to prepare for writing the play. The play will be produced and performed in the village of Bigfork as a Centennial event in 1989.

The students are:

Michelle Allen
Tim Bray
Cathy Childers
Adam Colby
Cinda Ebeling
Kelly Ferkovitch
Penny Gill
Chyrl Gordon
Ken Johnson
Tammy Metroke
Ann Murray
Shane Murray
Mike McCann
Ruth Rickenbacher
Jeff Searcy
Sarah Syverson
Gabe Wilcoxin

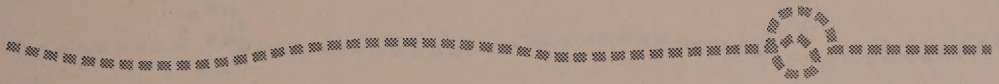
Next Stop: Bigfork

Act One

Scene 1

EXTERIOR — The light comes up slowly as the curtain opens. Nine or ten high school students are seated in a half-circle with their backs to the audience. They are dressed in clothes contemporary to the late 1980's. Modern Bigfork is in the background. They are talking among themselves.

An old man enters from stage left as the teacher brings his students to order. The students become quiet. The old man is slightly bent, has a wrinkled face, and is dressed in stylish clothes 50 years out-of-date. He walks slowly towards the front of the class.



TEACHER: Okay, class, let me have your attention. I'd like to introduce our guest today, Mr. Harry McElroy. [Speaking to McElroy] Welcome to our class, Mr McElroy. It's an honor to have you here. The class has been researching the history of Bigfork for sometime now. We hope to write a play based on our discoveries, with some original ideas of our own thrown in. We want to produce this for the Montana Centennial celebration in 1989. I guess we'll go ahead and let the students ask you some questions; any stories you can remember from the past will be helpful for this project.

Long pause as students shyly look around at one another.

MALE STUDENT #1: [raises his hand] What kinds of things did you do in your spare time as a kid?

McELROY: Back then kids didn't have as much free time as kids do today. They made their own fun, like riding horses and building their own toys. Nothing made of plastic, you see. People had to hunt and get their own food so the kids were too busy to play. Oh, they played marbles and some of them would get together and play "pom-pom pull away" [proceeds to show and explain how to play but gives up when he sees he is losing the students' interest]. Baseball games were the big events then. Everyone always showed up to see the rival game between Somers and Bigfork. The Kehoe family always took us across the lake to play different teams. They owned a steamboat over at Holt [points in the direction of Holt].

FEMALE STUDENT #1: What was Bigfork like back then?

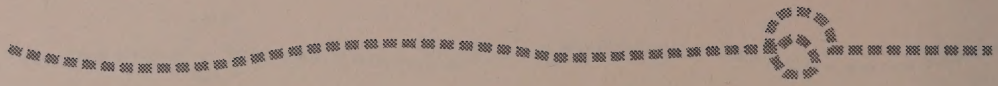
McELROY: Well, Bigfork was a quaint little village.

MALE STUDENT #2: [turns around to the audience] Not much has changed!

FEMALE STUDENT #2: [raises her hand] When did they first have telephones in Bigfork?

McELROY: Well, the first telephone belonged to the Forest Service, but I think Everitt Sliter was the first one to own civilian telephone. Not many people could afford them back then you understand; they required batteries which kept going out all the time.

FEMALE STUDENT #3: Why, gosh, then, like, how did you call your friends?



McELROY: [holds his hand up to his mouth and yells] Hey, George!

MALE STUDENT #3: When you first came here, how much was a Big Mac?

McELROY: [chortles] The Big Macs we ate had four legs and we had to skin 'em ourselves [class laughs]. We ate deer, pheasants, potatoes and mush (that's milk and cornmeal). But people around here worked like horses. You see, this has always been a very productive valley for grain — no, never a failure in this valley for grain. Apples were a big crop, and there were more of them than cherries. Now, to answer your question, there was a restaurant, I remember its name, the "Fisherman's Home," owned by Old Man Weed. Every once in a blue moon some friends and I would go there if we ever had an extra 15 cents for a hamburger.

STUDENTS CHORUS: Fifteen cents!!!!

McELROY: ... and it was a real treat when we did.

FEMALE STUDENT #4: Were you born in Bigfork?

McELROY: No. I was born in the East; grew up in a small suburb just outside of Boston. But I've got to tell you: coming to Bigfork in those days was like stepping back in time.

As McElroy continues speaking the foreground scenery of modern day Bigfork slowly "dissolves" to reveal OLD BIGFORK. Students and desks slowly slide away to STAGE LEFT and STAGE RIGHT.

McELROY: Back then there were more conveniences in the East compared to Bigfork. Boston had street lights, paved roads, and a lot more cars than horses. Bigfork's streets were all dust or mud and there was manure everywhere. I was a strapping young man just out of college and was driving up here in my new Model-T ... Well, wait a minute ... I guess I should explain the reason I was coming up here to begin with was that I had a friend in college who suggested I visit his home in Montana and that we go sightseeing through Glacier Park — which had just opened. Coming out West back in those days was out of the ordinary. The only thing we knew about it was from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and dime novels. Being rather adventurous, I though it was a bully idea. So right after graduation, we packed our bags and were off. We soon discovered that driving through the West in a car was a little more difficult that we thought it would be. After we crossed the Mississippi the

road got a lot rougher — where there were roads — and as we got into Montana it got even worse. We didn't know it at the time, but we were the first ones to come up the East Shore Road in an automobile; we actually had to drag it over the rocks a couple of places and would have lost it in the lake if it hadn't been for a bunch of convicts working on the road. [scratching his chin in distraction] Nice fellows; one of them told us he had robbed a stage coach! Anyway, we never made it to Glacier Park — our car broke down just as we were pulling into Bigfork. Unbeknownst to me, I was about to discover what I was going to do with the rest of my life ...

There are so many waters in Libby
I don't know where to start

Libby Elementary School & Libby Middle School — Ripley Schemm

Untitled

You with your happy grin
and my patience running thin,
You with your funny laugh
and me only caring a half,
You and your good friends,
me with nothing but loose ends,
You with your ability to learn
and me with an ability to squirm
You with your noble truth
and me with being so uncouth,
You with your happy family
and mine being so uncanny.
You with your expensive clothes —
I dress ok I suppose,
You with all your money
and my being broke is funny.

—Rich Nielson
7th Grade, Libby Middle School

Pebbles of My Mind

In my mind
there have been
many things tossed about

Like minute rocks
in a large tumbler
and after a little
bit of labor
ideas come out
either shining victoriously
or horribly contorted

The contorted ones
are rejected and smoothed out more
until they come out elliptical
and shiny just like pebbles
that can, in time, shine in the dark

—Philip J. Smart
7th Grade, Libby Middle School

The Bridge

Across the logging bridge, and down
the train tracks aways, I used to go and throw
dirty rocks and old, rotten tree limbs in the swift creek with my friend,
where Champion was seen puffing out
bursts of dirty wood smoke
and the trains went by. My friend
would throw big rocks off
the logging bridge and watch them
make a splash.

Across the logging bridge, and down
the tracks aways, my friend and I dug up a
large,
rusty,
old paper machine,
buried in the sand. As we left,
a frog hopped out of the back
of the box, exposing a coin hidden by
the sand, exposing treasure long
hidden.

—Jay Forsyth
7th Grade, Libby Middle School

The Government

You who stands above me, so great and tall,
You who tell us there is no more crime,
You who build the nuclear missiles,
You who make war with other countries,
You who allow people to starve,
You who made the national deficit,
You who waste our land,
You, you are the people.

—Ryan Stephens
7th Grade, Libby Middle School

The Flathead Dock

The old dock was big,
stretching from one side of the bay
to the other.
It was useful for the many people
who used it.
Now the old dock
is washed a way
by violent storms.
All that is left behind
are slanting black piers,
gravestones in the water.

—Amy Smart
8th Grade, Libby Middle School

The Logger

I can tell you about that man,
I can tell you where he works.
He works in the woods.
How can I tell?
Well, he's my friend!
He'll eat, then sleep,
get up at 4:00 and
go back to the woods.

—D'Lon Kuntz
8th Grade, Libby Middle School

The Hunting Camp

I stare through the trees
and smell the sticky pine.
I see the wildlife strutting
through the brush.
I'm on the trail.
I smell smoke up ahead.
I hike through the last
bunch of trees.
Just up the hill I can see
it now.
I can feel my heart bumping
and thumping with excitement.
It is the hunting camp.

—Todd Hansen
9th Grade, Libby Middle School

Grandma's Shelf

On a shelf
in my Grandma's house
there are china plates
with little blue flowers
entwined with vines and leaves.

On a shelf
in my Grandma's house
there are ceramic clowns
with painted faces.
On my Grandma's shelf.

—Mycale A. Noble
5th Grade, Libby

Untitled

There're so many waters in Libby
I don't know where to start.
There's Libby Creek, Granite, and then there's Pipe.
There's Flower, Parmenter, Cherry, and Bobtail Creeks.
That is just the beginning!

Do you want to know some more?
The rivers of Libby go on and on.
There's Kootenai, Fisher, and Yaak.
There's Thompson River, too. And don't forget
the lakes, they're important, too:
3 Thompson, 2 Loon, Crystal and Leigh one each.
And 22 Cookinusas — oops, just kidding!

—Group poem of LEEP Students
3rd, 4th and 5th Grades, Libby

If I got ahold of the wind

Fort Shaw/Simms School
Sun River School
Vaughn School
Carter, Knees & Benton Lake Schools
Cascade School
Ulm School
Belt School
Highwood School
Centerville School

Ripley Schemm

What Was Once Theirs

What I remember about the past is
The Blackfeet being forced off
Their lands and pushed northward
By the greedy white settlers.

The white American soldiers
Built forts to guard and
Keep the Blackfeet from
Taking back their land.

But soon many of the settlers
Moved on, leaving the forts
Sitting abandoned and alone.

The Blackfeet of today are
Now trapped on a
reservation, with only the
Memories of the land that
Was once theirs.

—Larry Bautista
8th Grade, Fort Shaw/Simms School

Remember

I remember hearing of my great-great grandfather.
He was a part of the fort's past.
He was a writer,
and a good one I hear.

He wrote reports and histories in our family history book
I can not remember all of them.
But there is one thing I do remember

I remember the funny problem of the potato bugs
and their many solutions that they tried that didn't work.
There are not many things I remember but this is one.

There is one more thing I remember.
He and his wife had to have been very brave.
They were some of the first white settlers in this valley.
There are not many things I remember but this is one.

When I read his writing, I can just see everything —
the problems, the battles, and the good times.
and I think they will always be remembered.

—Clint Baker
8th Grade, Fort Shaw/Simms School

Broken Pieces

The broken pieces of history
lying shattered on the ground here.
The old fort and pieces of the past
on the ground waiting to rejoin.

The broken pieces of history
moving all around here.
The old times and days are there
but never thought to be important
as the present.

The broken pieces of history
will always come and be here,
yet, the old people will die
and the pieces will move farther apart.

—Eric Askeland
8th Grade, Fort Shaw/Simms School

Waiting In My Room

I'm waiting in my room,
I'll be ungrounded soon.
I wonder what I'll do
when I'm ungrounded.
I wonder where I'll go,
I may get pounded,
waiting in my room.

—Wesley Swingley
4th Grade, Fort Shaw/Simms School

Untitled

If I were a music note
I would please old and young.
I would try to make the world
happy.

I would be tricky and smooth
gentle and rough. I would be
put in songs and I would
really like you.

—Angela MacDonald
3rd Grade, Sun River School

That Wind

It howls at night, that wind.
It whistles in the day, that wind.
It shakes the windows and
rocks the trees, that wind.
It whispers in my ears and
messes up my hair, but after
all that, I still love that wind.

—Becky Higgins
5th-6th Grades, Sun River School

The Wind

If I got ahold of the wind,
I would stomp on it!
I would tear it apart.
If I could, I would put
a stinky sock in its mouth
to stop it. I, terribly,
hate the wind!

In the night it howls around
the corners of your house.
It makes such a bad noise
You might get windburnt.
It blows dust in your face.
If I were the wind,
I wouldn't even blow.

—Billie Jo Norris
6th Grade, Sun River School

To Get to the River

During the summer
go by the wood where
the berries grow
but after it has snowed,
go on the road.
When the leaves
are green
and the blackbirds
are together,
it's time to gather
the berries before
they get them.
If you don't, there's no pie
so don't bother
going fishing.

—Matt MacDonald
7-8th Grades, Sun River School

The Top

Back in the mountains
the people are scarce.
You can use a tree
in privacy.
The game back in the trees
are beautifully colored and tame.
When they have their young,
it's a beautiful sight to see
The streams flow freely
without construction
backing away.
The mountains aren't a place
to worry about problems.

That's what I love about
the mountains.

—Darin Allen
7th-8th Grades, Sun River School

Untitled

Holter Lake in the dark:
listening to all of the chatter of
people on the lake, hearing "Reel
it in Slow! Be careful, you'll flip
the boat. It's a big one! Look out,
Moby Shark's going to get ya!"

And here I sit on the bank,
looking and listening to all that.
What fun! awaiting my friends.
Oh, what do you know — They're back
and guess who gets to clean the fish.

—Shawna Monique Linney
7th-8th Grades, Sun River School

Untitled

If I were a rainbow,
I'd reach the heaven tops,
and then my bottoms would reach
Great Falls and Vaughn, and there
would be a pot of gold
where I live.

—Stephanie Bury
Vaughn School

Untitled

If I were a fence post,
I'd wonder why things
sat on me,
and people climbed on me
And why a horse scratched
on me.
Oh, it's hard being
a fence post.

If I were a meadowlark,
I'd enjoy sitting on
a fence post.
And if I were a person,
I'd enjoy climbing on
a fence post.
And if I were a horse,
I'd like being scratched by
a fence post.

—Kimberlee Rice
Vaughn School

Untitled

Was that you
that blew my
Mom's tree over,
that made the dust
swirl, you that swept the snow
away, you that blew me along,
you who were
sweeping the plains?
Was that you who kept the bugs
away? Was that
you, you pesky
thing? Thanks
but no thanks.

—Monica Rushton
Vaughn School

My Knife

glistens when the dim light
of my lamp hits the blade.
Its leather case is made of
a light-colored grain.
The blade has small spots
of blood from the last
hunt.

—Neil Stanfield
Vaughn School

If I Were A Homestead

If I were a homestead,
I would be happy and joyous
To know I was helping a dream,
A dream to the homesteader.

If I were a homestead,
I would always smell of baking.
Mrs. Smith would always
Let me have that aroma.

If I were a homestead
I would see Mr. Smith
Come home at night
With his old weary face.

If I were a homestead,
I would someday be left
To crumble and fall,
And to become part of history.

Someday I'll be famous.
So will Mr. and Mrs. Smith
For they were the first white men,
And I was the first homestead.

—Terri White
5th Grade, Benton Lake School

Dear City Cousins

We hope *you* get to drive
the tractor, the truck,
or the combine, riding on
your Dad's lap. We hope you
get to ride on the back of
a horse, a pig, or a calf —
and fall off in the mud!

If you *don't* get to jump
in a river, sleep out
in a tent, watch bright stars,
or listen to wind, you'd better
come be our Country Cousins.

—Kindergarten students
Carter, Knees, and Benton Lake Schools

Untitled

If I were a story,
I would talk all the time.
I wouldn't be afraid
to tell about a cat
or a rat.

If I were a story,
I would be alive
because I would be
telling about something.

—Alyssa Deck
3rd Grade, Carter School

Untitled

My grandma told
old tales of the Knees.
I remember a tale that
was told, that the Knees
got its name because it looked
like the knees of a giant,
sleeping.

It's a neat name
for a big hill
and I like
the Knees a lot.

Once I went up
on the Knees. I saw
the cross that was up
there. It was a bumpy
ride, but I survived.

It's a neat name
for a big hill
and I like
the Knees a lot.

—LaMae Kaun
3rd Grade, Knees School

Untitled

I'm the fence the cows
try to break to get out
to the open grass land
and play, play, play.

I'm the fence that keeps
the cows in so they can't
get out and play, play, play.

—Justin Marquis
3rd Grade, Cascade School

The Mystical Stream

The stream I see
With icicles and limestone carvings
Starts somewhere I know not of,
On a mountain top above my head.

Or maybe in a gurgling spring
Rolling down the hill,
Singing, singing,
Over logs and man-made dams
Until,
At last ...
Into my hands.

—Hillary Mack
5th Grade, Cascade School

Untitled

My special place is home,
not near the town,
there I feel like a small pine cone.

—Barbara Kunz
5th Grade, Cascade School

A Day on the Bus

I was hot and tired
the air was stuffy
and smelled of sweat.
The scenery was o.k.
but was tiring to look at.

—Rose Deshner
6th Grade, Cascade School

Untitled

I remember
the creek behind our house,
the herd of cattle grazing in the field,
the mountains I climb,
the hikes I take,
the branding at the Ranch,
the cats running around,
and planting corn in the garden.
That's what I remember.

—Jamie Duerr
7th Grade, Cascade School

Leaving Illinois

I remember moving here,
getting up at dawn to travel
the long never-ending
black-topped highways,
feeling so cramped up
in a tight ball in
the back asleep.
Stopping at old broken
down restaurants to find
where we were headed,
and finally we got here,
all tired and worn.

—Amber Garrett
8th Grade, Cascade School

Untitled

You poor old horse
Lying there like I do in a math course
Bored to death, nothing to do.
I'm glad I'm not you.
I see you lying there all day long.
sometimes I feel like I should
Go ask you to play ping-pong.
I think it would be stupid but
something to do instead of you
lying there all day long.

—Darci Robertson
7th Grade, Ulm School

Untitled

When I am waiting
I think a Dog is
coming. I think
a cat is coming.
I do not know if
anybody is coming.

—Billie Smith
3rd Grade, Ulm School

Do Not Touch!

Do not touch is what my brother always said
When I tried to look through his telescope.
My dad bought it for him to look at the
Sun, moon, and stars.
I tried to look, honest I did
But he always caught me.
Then one day I thought he was away.
I looked through it and saw a hand in the way.
It was him and he said,
DO NOT TOUCH!

—Tobi Jiminez
4th Grade, Ulm School

Untitled

Do not touch
My shelf is private,
With old tools,
And glass dolls,
That bugle that still bugles
And the funny sign:
DO NOT TOUCH THAT MEANS U KID

Do not touch
The cross I found
Near a burial ground,
The adobe bowl,
Cracked on one side.

Do not touch
The leather band
That a warrior wore
And the eagle feather
That was still with it
With an arrow near
A buffalo skull.

—Mark Burwell
5th Grade, Ulm School

Untitled

If I was a cat, I'd run and jump
and play the way a cat does.
I would lap up all my milk,
I'd get to be petted and sleep
on the end of the bed all day.

If I was a cat, I'd play with
my tail. I'd play on the farmer's
bale. I could run to the barn
and see the farmer milking the cows.
When the calf trips over the rope,
when it is night, I might sleep
on the porch.

—Mave Gliko
Belt School

Untitled

Running in the meadow together
as the sun shines on your golden
hair, you seem to become part of
the yellow grass.
All I can see is your dark brown
back. And then you fall behind
and start barking at a frog, you
silly dog.

—Doug Sutich
5th Grade, Belt School

Untitled

When I think about you, Great
grandfather, I remember those
long days fishing. Your smile
when I brought one in.
Oh, Great grandfather, I remember
those days sitting in the sun
talking, drinking something cold,
sitting on your lap while you
talked and laughed in your
comforting way. I remember
your strong hands used from
so much work and caring, Great grandfather.

I remember grandma telling me
about your taking her to the shoe shop
and showing her what you did. Working
hard all day to buy her a pair of
little sandals for the school year.
Oh, Great grandfather, those years
may seem long ago, but think long ago,
Great grandfather, and you will remember.

—Andrea Johnson
6th Grade, Belt School

Untitled

If I were a rancher forever
and ever? I would drive the tractor
and plant the field and seed
the field.

—Nikki Kurth
1st Grade, Highwood School

Untitled

I wish I were a wolf
because people would worry
about me because I am getting
extinct. I could hunt good,
I could stay up late.

—Jason Pollington
2nd Grade, Highwood School

My Special Place

While I'm sitting here
watching the cows,
the newborn calves,
I think of how special
this place is.
I wait for my brother
he comes
we look for old driftwood
to make a bridge.
We take big pieces, little pieces,
and walk across.

Others share this place
with us — antelope, deer, mink,
beaver and horses. There's coyotes
that run the sheep,
cows and horses that graze,
calves that jump and play, rabbits that
hop around, raccoons that chase the insects,
and beaver that lap their tails
to and fro.
I love this place very much.

—Hannah Highfill
4th Grade, Highwood School

Alone

All alone in the night,
The sky so dark and still,
Nothing is moving,
Not even one single leaf.
The bushes are still.
The little fish in the pond
Doesn't even move an inch.
The Northern Lights
still seem to show
Wait, one shooting star,
All alone in the night.

—Kelly Knudson
5th Grade, Highwood School

Our House

Why is our house so old?
But it's still standing.
How is it people
Leave things and move away?
All the things are still there.
I like to look through them,
And find lots of old things.
But why did people before us
Leave chinaware?
A lot is broken, but some is still there.
How come there's a cane?
It's old fashioned.

—Lois Long
5th Grade, Highwood School

The Groceries

I'm always waiting for our groceries
to get through the line and while
I'm waiting, I wonder
what the cashier is thinking.
I think he is thinking that
we have too many groceries
and too many children
and a big family.

—Julie Ruby
3rd Grade, Centerville School

Untitled

An old wrecked cabin
All dusty and torn
Used to stand there
Until nature took it away
With the old pine that used to be there.

Many people passed it by
On the way to get wood
From the hill so far
White-capped with snow
and scattered with lush green trees.

Some would cross the North Bench
To Fort Benton to get goods
That came up the Missouri River
From so far downstream.

And some would make their life
From things that were given to them
By nature

But some didn't care about it
And left themselves to life.

—Chad Hansen
6th Grade, Highwood School

Untitled

I am a class calendar
of the year 1996.
The kids stare at me
and make plans for
the next day.
Right now it is April
and the class is excited
to get out of school,
and I am excited to
be switched to May
because it reminds
me of Spring and
flowers in full bloom.
As the April month
is torn away
and May is in its
place.

—Jacob Cowgill
4th Grade, Centerville School

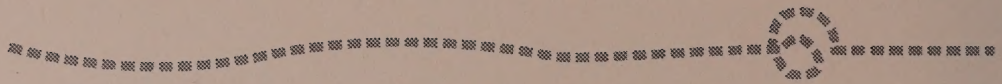
Untitled

Centerville Bench is like
a real bench, you can sit
on it and watch the stars
and the wildlife
that runs and plays.

Anonymous
4th Grade, Centerville School

It's just that I've always been
one with the land

Blue Sky High School (Rudyard) — Ripley Schemm



Catch Up to the Buffalo

It has been years since I've
last been living at my old Homeland.
I miss it like a lonely orphan longs
for his parents.

I feel attached and I feel one
with the land. Maybe because my roots
are there, and that my heritage
was born there.

I don't know. Maybe my ancient
ancestral culture draws me to the land
where trees are green, the Creek bubbling
and flowing like a stream of diamonds;
the Canyons and huge rocks rise high
among the Clouds and where the Eagle
soars, the Forests where thousands
upon thousands of animals dwell.
In the Meadows, splattered with Colors. The Prairie, vast
and rolling like thundering Clouds.

Maybe I know now why my
people loved the land, and why
they believed no one person, except
the Great Spirit owned it. And
why they were crushed in their
hearts when they were deprived
of it.

Maybe that is why I feel
I understand the land and its
Creatures so well. It's just
that I've always been one
with the land.

I'm going to leave this place
here and go back to my
homeland. I will never forget
the friends I have made here
or the things I've done, but
it's just as well I leave
and be with my people
again —
to Catch up to the Buffalo.

—Catcher Cuts the Rope
9th Grade, Blue Sky High School

Untitled

I walk tall through the long grass
Carefree, humming, careless.
Grass and fields as far as the eye cares to see
A rattler sounds in the grass under my feet.
Jumping and trying to see the snake my heart clutches.
I see him, firing without thinking.
Two opponents moving away from each other.
One tall and scared
One low and scared
Both deadly
It's a big country and an unforgiving land.

—Mark Wicks
11th Grade, Blue Sky High School

Untitled

The wind never stops
as it blows bad
memories into your face,
the ones you'll never forget.
It laughs at the sight of burning
eyes because the grimy particles
fly by you at speeds unknown.
It never rests until the small
children that were peacefully
playing in the sand box are forced
to retire and go in for the wind.
And, yes. It finds the open
windows and blows the hot dirt
from a dust storm into your freshly
dusted house. It blows the tumble
weeds across the barren plains
of Montana.

But you put up with it, you have to ...
'cause the wind won't stop.

—Julianne Jurenka
9th Grade, Blue Sky High School

Untitled

Looking out the hallway window
on a cold and snowy day, you can see
the white Sweetgrass hills off in
the distance. As the sun sets, the snow
acts as a mirror, and creates a
mysterious feeling about the land.

As spring comes along, slowly the
warmth melts the snow, the mountain
comes from hibernation and begins
to grow active and colorful.

There is the bluish-purple tinge of
summer for which we have waited.
The sign of another cycle at its peak,
making it look like a mansion
scene for a king.

—Karen Twedt
10th Grade, Blue Sky High School

Wishing

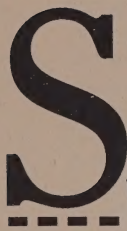
You're working in the field
Plowing up weeds.
It hasn't rained for so long
You can't tell where you went last round.
Oh well. If you miss a patch
Who will know?
Out here in the middle of nowhere
It's hot and dusty.
You wish you were in town
with your buddies
Having fun
Driving fast
Talking loud
Being bad.
But you're still out here
In the heat, dust, and wind
Driving around in circles
Trying to see where you went
Last round.

—Ken Jackson
11th Grade, Blue Sky High School

Untitled

I can see the past here
In the worn sandstone and rocks,
The Indian, whoever he is, buried here,
Where he can see forever.
He can see the teepee rings,
And down the slope to the river.
The river flows on, like time and forever.
The view is beautiful, but it is changing.
In the distance I can see a power line.
It does not make the view less beautiful,
But smaller,
Something less than forever.

—Kristi Han
Blue Sky High School



un becomes the shadow of snow

Poplar High School — B.J. Buckley

Untitled

Don't hold me until eternity
never closes its eyes
I like to see the little lights
surrounding my image of you.
My life is like a drowsy kitten
slowly drooping
I like the touch of your hand ...
It's hard to determine your side.

—Josef LaFromboise
11th Grade, Poplar High School

Winter Haiku

I feel sad and cold
in winter time. Sun becomes
the shadow of snow.

—Yvonne Dehner
Poplar High School

Silence

— Silence —
As she lays there with her fingers
over her mouth the secret inside her
begs to come out.
The Silence she holds within her
is hard to bear and she wants
to let it out but she's scared.
She covers up her lips to keep it
from spilling out.
And from now on she feels vulnerable
and scared and keeps herself hidden.

—Jenny Brown
Poplar High School

Study Hall

Bright yellow walls that are geometric
Brenda sits across from me day after
day, smiling and giggling.
Silver bars support the wooden tops of desks,
Brown floors with scratches and scruffs
from years of students.
The windows are smudged from steamy
breath as Brandan and Dean look outside.
We are locked in by grey bars across windows.
Kids are concentrating hard.
Eyes bulge.
Others chatter.
The stereo pulsates and the
room fills with rhythm.
The sun shines through bars
shadowed momentarily by the
passing heads of the passing gym kids.
Day after day, nothing changes.
A face less, a face more.
Never changes.

—Patti Wiseman Dirras
Poplar High School

Untitled

A sightless person
seeking to see life again
settles for feeling.

—Frances Simon
Poplar High School

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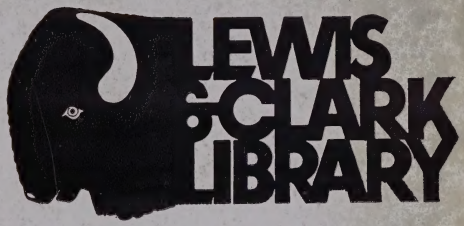

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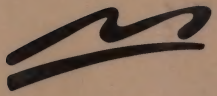

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